THE KARṆĀṬA RULERS OF MITHILĀ

By

Shri Kamalnarain Jha 'Kamalesh'

The Karṇāṭas ruled over Mithilā from A.D. 1097 to A.D. 1324. They originally belonged to a section of the Paramāras who had migrated from Dhārā to Karṇāṭaka. Nānyadeva was the first to come from Karṇāṭaka with a band of staunch followers. He stayed in a forest in Mithilā. While sitting on a piece of elevated land his eyes fell on a hooded serpent. He noticed something written on the hood and called for his Brahmin companion who read it as follows:

"रामो वेत्ति नलो वेत्ति वेत्ति राजा पुरूरवाः ।
अलर्कस्य धनं प्राप्य नान्यो राजा भविष्यति ।।"

"Having acquired the treasure of Kubera Nānya will become the Rājā of this land. It is well known to Rāma, Nala and Rājā Purūravā."

The place where the serpent sat was dug and a big treasure was discovered. With all that he could get there Nānyadeva raised a huge army and established his rule over Mithilā in A.D. 1097. He established his first capital at the place where he had come across the serpent and called it 'Nānyapura'. In the same year he built his second capital and fort at Simraongarh. The text of the inscription found at Simraongarh is given below:

"नन्देन्दु-विन्दु-शशि सम्मित शाक-वर्षे
तच्छ्रावणे सितदले मुनि-सिद्ध-तिथ्याम् ।
स्वाती-शनैश्चरयुते करि-वैरि-लग्ने
तन्नान्यदेवनृपतिः विदधीत वास्तुम् ।।"

"In 1019 Śaka era Śrāvaṇa white fortnight the 7th Saturday, Siddhi yoga, Svātī Nakshatra and Siṁha lagna King Nānyadeva completed the construction of the fort."

The Sena rulers of Bengal and Bihar could not tolerate the existence of a sovereign state in their neighbourhood. King Ballālasena invaded Mithilā. Rājā Nānyadeva having been defeated had to pass days as a war prisoner in the fort at Gaṇḍeshwar. The well known court poet Umāpatidhara has depicted in his poem very artistically the pitiable condition of the Rājā which was engraved on a stone piece and has been preserved in the Calcutta Museum. Prince Gaṅgadeva, the son of Rājā Nānyadeva, collected a big

army at village Ghorhar and gave a crushing defeat to Ballālasena[1] at a battle which took place at village Dwālakh. The victorious army brought Rājā Nānyadeva back to his capital.

In 1134 Gaṅgadeva succeeded his father Nānyadeva and ruled till 1148. For administrative conveniences he divided his territory into a number of Parganas and appointed a chaudharī for each of them. He constructed a fort at Andhra Tharhi. His brother Malladeva became a chief courtier of Rājā Jayachandra of Kanauj and established the supremacy of Mithilā over a big portion of Nepāl.

Narasiṁhadeva succeeded Gaṅgadeva in 1148. He ruled till A.D. 1204. He acted as the commander-in-chief of the victorious army of Mohammad Ghori. He quarrelled with his cousin, the ruler of Nepāl, with the result that Nepāl became a separate state quite independent of Mithilā.

In 1204 Rāmasiṁhdeva succeeded his father Narsiṁhdeva. He proved a great patron of Sanskrit literature. It was during his rule that commentaries on Vedas were compiled. Mahāmahopādhyāya Śreekara Āchārya wrote the famous commentary on Amarakosha called the 'Vyākhyāmṛitaṃ.' Ratneshwar wrote Ratnadarpaṇa, a commentary on Saraswatī Kaṇṭhābharaṇa and Pṛithivîdhar Āchārya wrote his famous commentary on the drama book 'Mṛichchha-Kaṭika'. It was during his rule that the renowned Gaṇesh Pandit and the well known philosopher Vāchaspati Miśra, the author of 'Bhāshya Bhāmatī' flourished. Rājā Rāmasiṁhdeva died at the good old age of 92 during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mohammad of Delhi.

Shaktisiṁhdeva who succeeded Rāmasiṁhdeva was a great scholar and patron of learning. Since he could not attend to administrative works personally he appointed a council of seven ministers with Chaṇḍeshwar Mahatā at its head to rule over the territory. He compiled the 'Sapta Ratnākar-Kṛitya Ratnākar, Dāna Ratnākar, Vyavahāra Ratnākar, Shuddhi Ratnākar, Pūjā Ratnākar, Vivāda Ratnākar, Gṛihastha Ratnākar', the well known Sanskrit works. He could rule only for five years and died during the reign of Sultan Balban of Delhi.

Harisiṁhdeva who succeeded Shaktisiṁhdeva has been still a household name in Mithilā for having compiled with the help of Pandit Raghudeva Jha the famous 'Pañji Prabandh'. In this big volume is preserved the geneological tables with matrimonial connections of the different Brahmin and Kāyastha families of Mithilā. It took him six years to finish this compilation of great historical importance in 1324 A.D., i.e. 1245 of the Śaka Era.

"शाके श्री हरिसिंहदेवनृपतेर्भूपार्कतुल्ये जनिः ।
तस्माद्दन्तमितेब्दके द्विजगणैः पंजीप्रबंधः कृतः ।।"

[1] Or Vijayasena ? (See *History of Mithilā* published by Mithilā Institute, Darbhanga, 1956.)—Ed.

In 1324 Sultan Ghyasuddin Tughlak of Delhi invaded Mithilā. Rājā Harisiṁhdeva faced him boldly. Being defeated, the courageous Rājā marched into the forest of Nepāl and occupied possession over a considerable portion of the territory.

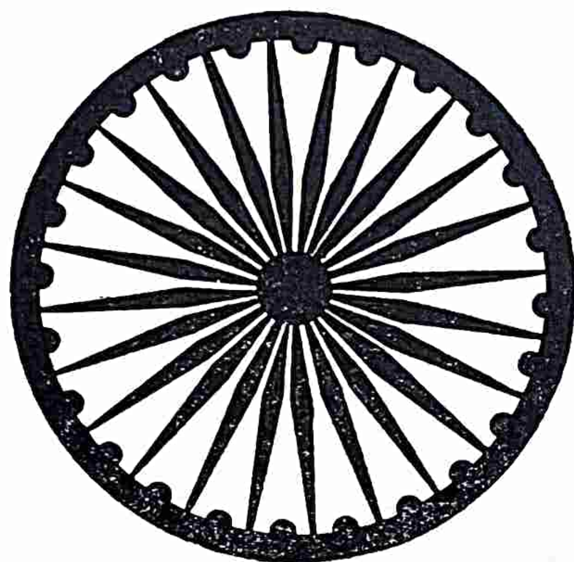
"वाणाब्धिबाहुशशिसम्मितशाकवर्षे
पौषस्य शुक्ल दशमी क्षिति सूनु वारे ।
त्यक्त्वा स्वपट्टनपुरीं हरिसिंहदेवो
दुर्दैवदर्शितपथो गिरिमाविवेश ।।"

Harisiṁhdeva ruled over Nepāl till 1353. His descendants proved popular monarchs there also and their sovereignty was recognised by the Chinese Emperor during the reign of Rājā Matisiṁhdeva and his son Shaktisiṁhdeva. Shyāmasiṁhdeva was the last of Karnāṭa rulers of Nepāl. He had no male issue and so after his death the crown of Nepāl passed over to his daughter's son Jayasthi Malla. Mallas ruled over Nepāl till before the Gorakhā conquest in 18th century A.D. Malla rulers of Nepāl took pride in calling themselves descendants of Karṇāṭas.

The Karnāṭa rule in Mithilā proved a blessing. The rulers were lovers of Sanskrit literature and so different branches of learning received due patronage. Chaṇḍeshwar, Śreedattopādhyāya, Harināthopādhyāya, Bhava Sharma, Indrapati and Lakshmipati, the renowned scholars flourished during this rule. Jyotirîshwar compiled his famous works Pañchasāyaka and Raṅgashekhar and wrote the first prose book in Maithilī the 'Varṇana Ratnākar'. It was during this rule that commentaries on different important Sanskrit books were written. It was for all these that Karṇāṭa rule in Mithilā is being regarded as a very important chapter in the cultural history of India.

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